

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Original) A method for automatically provisioning a plurality of computing devices in accordance with established policies, the method comprising the steps of:

creating a plurality of templates reflecting said policies;  
expanding at least one template at a central location; and  
providing the expanded information to said plurality of computing devices.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising  
interpreting the expanded information by agents which are respectively  
resident on each of said plurality of computing devices.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the structure of said plurality of templates includes conditional statements.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to all of the plurality of computing devices.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a subset of the plurality of computing devices.

6. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a particular type of the plurality of computing devices.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said policies are security policies regarding user access to each of the plurality of computing devices.

8. (Original) A system for automatically provisioning a plurality of computing devices in accordance with established policies, the system comprising:

a database system which stores a plurality of templates which reflect said policies;

a plurality of agents which are respectively resident on each of said plurality of computing devices, and which communicate with said database system to obtain information with regard to provisioning and maintenance of the respective computing devices; and

a communications gateway through which communication messages are exchanged between said agents and said database system, wherein said communications gateway is configured to:

retrieve the plurality of templates;

expand the plurality templates; and

provided the expanded information to said plurality of agents.

9. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the structure of said plurality of templates includes conditional statements.

10. (Original) The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to all of the plurality of computing devices.

11. (Original) The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a subset of the plurality of computing devices.

12. (Original) The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the plurality of templates reflects policies applicable to a particular type of the plurality of computing devices.

13. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [7] 8, wherein said policies are security policies regarding user access to each of the plurality of computing devices.

14. (New) The system of claim 8, wherein at least one template includes a reference to information external to the template, and wherein said communication gateway expands the template by creating a document that includes information contained in the template and said external information.

15. (New) The system of claim 14 wherein said document is an XML document.

16. (New) The system of claim 14 wherein said external information comprises a list of users.

17. (New) The system of claim 9 wherein said communications gateway expands a template to include information contained in a conditional statement only if the computing device to which said expanded information is to be provided meets the condition.

18. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one template includes a reference to information external to the template, and wherein said expanding step comprises creating a document that includes information contained in the template and said external information.

19. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said document is an XML document.

20. (New) The method of claim 18, wherein said external information comprises a list of users.

21. (New) The method of claim 3, wherein said expanding step includes the step of including information contained in a conditional statement only if the computing device to which said expanded information is to be provided meets the condition.

22. (New) A method of controlling user access to networked computing devices, comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of templates that identify user-access policies for respective ones of said devices, at least one of said templates including a reference to information that is external to the template;

retrieving a template that pertains to a given one of said devices and creating a document comprising a listing of users identified in said template and users identified by any externally referenced information; and

providing said document to the given one of said devices.

23. (New) The method of claim 22 where said document is an XML document.

24. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein said external information comprises a list of users.

25. (New) The method of claim 24 wherein all of the users on said list perform a specified role relative to said computing devices.

26. (New) The method of claim 22 wherein at least one of said templates includes a conditional statement, and the step of creating a document comprises including information from said conditional statement in said document only if said given device meets the condition.

27. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein said plurality of templates are classified into at least two categories, wherein a template in a first category pertains to all of the computing devices, and a template in a second category pertains to a subset of said computing devices.

28. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein a template in said second category inherits policies contained in a template of said first category.

29. (New) The method of claim 28, wherein said inheritance can be selectively disabled.

30. (New) The method of claim 28, further including a third category of templates that pertain to specific devices and inherit policies from templates in said second category.

31. (New) A method for controlling user access to networked computing devices, comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of templates that identify user-access policies for respective ones of said devices, at least one of said templates including a conditional statement;

retrieving a template that pertains to a given one of said devices and creating a document comprising a listing of users identified in said template, and users identified in any conditional statement if said given device meets the condition; and providing said document to the given one of said devices.

32. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein said document is an XML document.

33. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein said plurality of templates are classified into at least two categories, wherein a template in a first category pertains to all of the computing devices, and a template in a second category pertains to a subset of said computing devices.

34. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein a template in said second category inherits policies contained in a template of said first category.

35. (New) The method of claim 34, wherein said inheritance can be selectively disabled.

36. (New) The method of claim 34, further including a third category of templates that pertain to specific devices and inherit policies from templates in said second category.